MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 1919.

The fifth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1919 was held in its office at 1729 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C., on Friday, March 21, 1919.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, the Chairman;

Mr. Adams;

Mr. Platt;

Mr. Kendall;

Mr. Pope;

Mr. Greenleaf;

also Colonel C. S. Ridley, U.S.A., Secretary and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m., and proceeded at once to the business before it.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS: The minutes of the preceding meeting held in Washington on January 24, 1919, and of a committee meeting held in New York City on March 10, 1919, were presented by the Secretary and approved.

2. PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD BRIDGE: Mr. Pope, acting as a committee for the Commission, met Colonel Tyler and Major Harrison of the local United States Engineer office and the Chief Engineer of the local section for the Pennsylvania Railroad at 10 o'clock in conference in regard to the revised design for the new Pennsylvania Railroad bridge which had already been considered at the committee meeting held in New York City March 10th last, and outlined under Section 3 of the minutes of that meeting. As a result of the conference these engineers will restudy the design of the bridge in order to achieve a result

more in conformity with the Commission's suggestions, namely, a bridge with more horizontal feeling and less projections, and these studies will be presented as soon as possible.

3. TREATMENT OF CONNECTION BETWEEN POTOMAC PARK AND ROCK CREEK PARK WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL: Colonel Ridley, as executive officer of the Rock Creek Parkway Commission and the Lincoln Memorial Commission laid before the Commission a drawing showing the proposed treatment of that part of the parkway connection between Potomac Park and Rock Creek Park that lies south of New Hampshire Avenue, with special reference to a road system to and from the Lincoln Memorial, north and south. Considerable discussion arose as to the necessity or convenience of an additional road bordering the river and below the Memorial itself, which the plan itself does not contemplate. It was observed that a careful study of the traffic situation between the Lincoln Memorial and Rock Creek Park would have to go hand in hand with the study of future traffic conditions southward from the Lincoln Memorial and particularly at the Ericsson memorial site; and Colonel Ridley was requested to have prepared for the next meeting an extension to the plan then under consideration showing proposed road connections towards the south.

4. SIMPLIFICATION OF PLANTING AROUND ARLINGTON MANSION: Mr. Greenleaf, acting as a committee, brought up for discussion again the problem of the simplification of planting around the Arlington Mansion which had been considered at the committee meeting in New York March 10th (see Section 5 of the minutes of that meeting). Later in the day he, accompanied by Messrs. Platt, Kendall, and Moore, made a personal inspection on the ground. The following day Mr. Greenleaf, with Mr. Moore and Mr. Kendall, also had a very satisfactory talk with Major Lemly in charge of Arlington Cemetery, in which the Major requested a detailed and frank report on the subject and promised his fullest

cooperation in every detail. Mr. Greenleaf, as a committee with power, will draw up the report and accompany it with a small sketch showing the Commission's suggestions for the revised treatment.

5. CONFERENCE REGARDING DESIGN AND SITE FOR ASBURY MEMORIAL: Congress by Act approved February 28, 1919 resolved

> "That the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to grant permission to the Francis Asbury Memorial Association for the erection on public grounds of the United States in the city of Washington, District of Columbia, other than those of the Capitol, the Library of Congress, and the White House, of a memorial to Francis Asbury, a pioneer itinerant, whose continuous journeyings through our cities, towns, villages, and early settlements, from seventeen hundred and seventy-one to eighteen hundred and sixteen, greatly promoted the interests of patriotism, education, morality, and religion and were a distinct aid to the American Republic: Provided, That the design of the memorial shall be approved and the site shall be chosen by the Commission of Fine Arts, and that the United States shall be put to no expense in or by the erection of the said memorial: Provided, That the memorial herein provided for shall not be erected or placed in any part of the Mall, or Potomac Park, nor on any ground within one-half mile of the Capitol".

The Commission during the past three years had a number of conferences with representatives of the Asbury Memorial Association, who proposed to erect the Asbury Memorial in the city of Washington, regarding possible sites and design for such a memorial. As Congress had not then given any authority for the erection of a memorial these conferences could be only informal, but as authority had recently been given by Congress official action could now be taken by the Commission. A committee comprised of Bishop Hamilton, of the M. E. Church, Dr. Carroll, Rev. Dr. Prettyman and the Rev. Dr. Watson of Baltimore, accompanied by Augustus Lukeman, sculptor, appeared before the Commission at 11 a.m. in behalf of a design which they, through the Chief of Engineers, U.S.A., submitted for erection. Under the law the Commission has the duty of selecting

the site, but these gentlemen urged that the site on the Government reservation between the intersection of Columbia Road and Sixteenth Street, called Harvard Park, be granted them. After careful inspection later in the day the Commission felt that, because of landscape difficulties and lack of scale of memorial to surroundings and site, this site would not be suitable, and therefore decided not to select it. Any one of three smaller reservations along Sixteenth Street above Harvard Park, namely, reservations 309A, 309B and 309C, were, however, considered suitable upon inspection, and it was decided to recommend these to the Asbury committee for their consideration. The design submitted was approved subject to the modification of details which are to be taken up with Mr. Lukeman, the sculptor, by Mr. Adams, as a committee with power.

6. DESIGNS FOR PARK SEATS: Sketch plan for a rustic park seat (P.B.&.G. file Nos. 2-8-414.3 and 414.4) and for a park seat for East Potomac Park, prepared by the office of Public Buildings and Grounds, were approved.

7. LINCOLN MEMORIAL BASIN AND GRADING PLAN FOR ADJOINING AREAS: In connection with the development of the reflecting basin to the east of the Lincoln Memorial and the contiguous areas Colonel Ridley laid twenty-five plans and sketches before the Commission for their advice and criticism. These plans were:-

1 - Grading Plan for area about the Lincoln Memorial
9 - Typical Sections of Roadways for area about Lincoln Memorial
1 - Typical Section of Roadway for 30' Road
4 - Road Cross Sections for 60' Road
4 - Sections of Ground Area surrounding the Lincoln Memorial
1 - Alternative Typical Section for 30' Road
2 - Typical Sections of lagoon facing Lincoln Memorial
1 - Alternate studies for lagoon facing Lincoln Memorial
1 - Tree Planting Plan for area about Lincoln Memorial
1 - Grading Plan for road from Lincoln Memorial to New Hampshire Avenue.

In particular he wanted the Commission's suggestions as to the depth of the basin, - the reduction in height of the flanking terrace from 4 feet to

3 feet, - and the question as to whether the cross-arm of the lagoon should be put in or eliminated; regarding the latter he suggested that it seemed that, even if it were decided that the cross-arm should go in, it would be a long time before it could be constructed because of the large Army office building on the ground where the northern arm is to go. The architect members of the Commission felt that, although they could see no objection to Colonel Ridley's suggestions including the elimination of the cross arm, they would like to have more time for study and an opportunity to discuss these problems with Mr. Bacon, the architect, and they requested that all these exhibits be forwarded to them in New York City for such purposes.

8. MERIDIAN HILL PLANS: Colonel Ridley brought up for the review of Mr. Platt and Mr. Pope, who had not seen the plans, four sheets of sections and a revised plan for the lower gardens and the hillside ascent for Meridian Hill Park, considered at the meeting on January 24th last. Perspective drawings for treatment of this section of the Park, according to these plans, will soon be prepared by his office. After some discussion, the architect members of the Commission felt that they would like to study these sections more in detail than the time then allowed, and requested that the exhibits be forwarded to them in New York City for committee action.

In this connection Mr. Greenleaf reported that he had discussed generally the planting plans for sections 3 and 4 for this park with Mr. Vitale of the firm of Vitale, Brinckerhoff & Geiffert, landscape architects, who are preparing it, with regard to ultimate effects of the planting. Certain changes made in these groups by Mr. Vitale since this discussion took place are called to the attention of the Officer in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds by a letter, copy of which is attached as Exhibit A.

9. SELECTION OF DE CAMP FOR PAINTING PEACE CONFERENCE PICTURES: Mr. Moore informed the members that the State Department had inquired of him as to whether the selection of Mr. John Singer Sargent to paint the picture of the American delegates to the Peace conference in Paris would be satisfactory. As the State Department was in a hurry for an answer he had advised that such a selection would be satisfactory to the Commission of Fine Arts. Mr. Sargent, however, was unable to accept the commission, and himself suggested Mr. De Camp of Boston for the work. Again the State Department inquired whether this would be acceptable to the Commission and, after getting in touch with the individual members of the Commission, Mr. Moore said that he had advised the State Department that the Commission would approve Mr. Sargent's suggestion for the selection of Mr. De Camp as the artist.

10. PLANTING PLAN FOR ARLINGTON MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATRE: Colonel Ridley, as Executive Officer of the Arlington Memorial Amphitheatre Commission, submitted a planting plan for the immediate vicinity of the Arlington Memorial Amphitheatre just submitted by Messrs. Carrere & Hastings, architects, of New York City, - the architects of the memorial. Mr. Greenleaf was appointed a committee with power in this matter, and later in the day with Mr. Kendall, Mr. Platt, and Mr. Moore, visited the site for the purposes of his report. The committee report is attached as Exhibit B.

After a brief interval for lunch the members of the Commission proceeded to East Potomac Park for an inspection of the wings of the new field house and its surroundings. From there they went to the Lincoln Memorial where, meeting Mr. Mather of the National Park Service, and Mr. Robert Lincoln, they inspected the Lincoln Memorial, and the just installed mural paintings by Jules Guerin. From there they went to Harvard Park, at Columbia Road and

Sixteenth Street, to inspect it and three smaller reservations to the north along Sixteenth Street as to their availability as sites for the Asbury Memorial. Thence to an inspection of the Sheridan statue, and from there to Arlington for consideration of the planting plans for the Arlington Memorial Amphitheatre and the immediate vicinity of the Lee Mansion.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the Commission adjourned at 7:00 p.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.

EXHIBIT A.

VITALE, BRINCKERHOFF AND GEIFFERT
527 Fifth Avenue,
New York.

March 20, 1919.

Col. C. S. Ridley,
Office of Public Buildings and Grounds,
1729 New York Avenue, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:-

Acknowledging your letter of March 17th, we wish to advise that we are sending you, under separate cover, revised planting plans and lists for Groups 3 and 4. The following changes were suggested by Mr. Greenleaf of the Fine Arts Commission and made in the plans and lists:-

Changes in Groups 3A and 4A -

6 Pinus cembra changed to Pinus strobus, heights 25, 28, and 30'

3 Cornus florida removed and a Fagus ferruginea put in their place

1 Pinus strobus in place of a Crataegus

Magnolia soulangeana changed to Magnolia grandiflora

Height of 3 Juniperus virginiana changed to 26, 28 and 30'

Euonymous radicans vegetus added to the lists of vines and changes made eliminating some of the Hedera helix to make room for this.

The lists and plans have been carefully checked and made to agree.

Yours very truly,

(singed) Vitale, Brinckerhoff and Geiffert,

per L.M. Whitehouse,
Manager.

LMW/B

EXHIBIT A.

EXHIBIT B

Memorandum concerning planting adjoining Memorial Amphitheatre
Arlington Cemetery, Virginia.

The Commission feel that the planting plan so far as concerns the placing of mass effects in relation to the Amphitheatre is correct. We take exception however to some details of the massing and particularly to the varieties of planting material specified. In our judgment the color tone and texture of material should be of simple nature, harmonizing with the native growth and the general planting of the cemetery, whereas there is a tendency in the planting scheme as shown to develop pronounced effects with flowering shrubs and trees of so-called colored foliage.

Treating in the first place of the general massing and form, we have this to say: While we approve the general massing in its relation to the Amphitheatre we would like more to relate it to the surrounding foliage rather than make it a separate and distinct achievement. With this in view the planting of large trees on the north side should be carried over in a more or less open way but sufficiently to give the effect of the woodland extending up to the Amphitheatre surroundings. Moreover the Commission is of the opinion that on the east side of the cross axis of the Amphitheatre there should be three or four American elms at each side and comparatively near the collonade so that eventually they would arch over it.

We think that the plantings "G" of linden along the west side of the drive should be run into in a group of three or four linden at each end, north and south to avoid a weak ending.

Still keeping our thought upon the massing of foliage and turning to the entrance of the Amphitheatre on the west side we find the question of grouping somewhat complicated by our query as to whether the arrangement of drive at the entrance is adequate for handling crowds and is therefore the best scheme to follow. In this respect we feel that the photograph of the perspective sketch showing the Amphitheatre and drives as a whole and indicating a relation of the Maine Memorial with the Amphitheatre is more interesting. We are not prepared to advocate reverting to that design however, as it introduces complications. I think I voice the feeling of the Commission when I state that we would like to see further consideration given to this approach on the west side of the Amphitheatre. So far as the planting there is concerned, the general idea seems proper that there should be a grouping of trees.

Turning to consider the character of materials both trees and shrubs, as represented in the plan and planting list, our point of view is indicated in the opening of this memorandum and now, to be more specific, we feel strongly that all colored foliage plants like retinosporia aurea, biota aurea, purple beech, Schwedler maple, etc. should be omitted. Also all freak forms like weeping beech and weeping birch should be omitted. These are our positive objections but, only second to them, is our opinion that the whole drift of the planting list is toward an ornamental planting such as an ambitious owner of a large

EXHIBIT B

sized villa plot might wish to plant around his house and grounds. Candidly, there is lacking that quiet restraint and dignity of effect that belongs with a National Cemetery. With this in view we would eliminate from the list a considerable part of the shrubs mentioned, retaining the simpler, less floriferous shrubs and replace the others with shrubs of fine foliage character such for instance as vacinnium corymbosum, viburnum cassinoides, myrica cerifera, etc. etc. In general, the fancy flowering shrubs belong in garden rather than public cemetery design.

Moreover we advise against the use at all prominently of the retinospora; absolutely against the golden as above stated, rather strongly against the other varieties specified. We believe heartily in the use of the red cedar, the hemlock, rhododendron and laurel. The Siberian arbor vitae is excellent for low effects and variety of foliage. We advocate the use of pinus montana and pinus mugho with Siberian arbor vitae and the like for low bushy evergreens.

In planting A. and B. we would emphasize more the evergreen grouping of hemlock and use with it some Douglas spruce and in detached groups slightly down the hill some hemlock and red cedar, then blend with this planting masses of rhododendron and laurel.

We like the plantings of large trees like the sugar maple and elm in plantings E. and F. but are strongly against tapering these plantings off with Schwedler maple and the weeping varieties of trees. It would be far better in our opinion to either leave the groups bold, strong plantings of tall growing trees or else taper off with outposts of cornus florida for example. As for groups C. and D., rhododendron, after it was well established and large, would look well but we would cut out entirely all azalea as probably the designer of the planting intended the azalea mollis which is far too brilliantly flowered. If any azalea is used it should be the native viscosa and the like. We feel however that with the groups E. and F. developed the effect from the terrace above will be far better with no planting at all at C. and D.

This memorandum is not intended as a condemnation of the planting scheme although our criticisms may seem rather radical. We admire the vision that the Architect has as to general composition of masses and we would like to see this composition so handled as to bring the Amphitheatre quietly into harmonious relation with the Cemetery and the adjoining woodland. What we are strongly opposed to however is the manifest drift of the planting scheme into a far too showy effect. There are too many flowering plants and too much effort to get a large variety of interesting specimens. Above all the colored foliage and the weeping forms should be cut out.